

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01
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O R 191802Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4983
INFO OSAF WASHDC
AMEMBASSY LISBON
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USNMR SHAPE
HQ USAFE RAMSTEIN
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 01075

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, PO, GW
SUBJECT: BEJA AIR BASE PORTUGAL

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BEGIN SUMMARY: THE "FOCUS ON GERMANY" ARTICLE ENTITLED
BUNDESWEHR TO RETAIN BEJA PORTUGAL BASE IS MISLEADING
AND IN GREATER PART INCORRECT. AGREEMENT ON FRG
RETENTION OF BEJA HAS NOT BEEN REACHED. THE MOST RECENT
COMPROMISE OFFER RECEIVED BY THE FMOD ON JANUARY 17,
1978, VARIES LITTLE FROM THAT OUTLINED IN PARA 3 OF
REFTEL B. THE NEW PORTUGUESE PROPOSAL NO LONGER CALLS
FOR AN ANNUAL RENTAL OF 20 MILLION DM, BUT FOR EXTENSIVE
FRG INVESTMENT CAPITAL IN AMOUNTS TO BE DETERMINED.
FMOD OFFICIALS HAVE REVIEWED AND REJECTED THE OFFER.
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THEY ARE PRESENTLY COORDINATING FRG POSITION WITH FONOFF
BEFORE INFORMING PORTUGAL OF THEIR REJECTION. END
SUMMARY.

1. THE JANUARY 1978 EDITION OF "FOCUS ON GERMANY,"
A MONTHLY INFORMATION PAMPHLET PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS
AND INFORMATION OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC CARRIED

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE CONCERNING BEJA AIR BASE IN PORTUGAL.

BEGIN QUOTE. THE SOUTH PORTUGUESE MILITARY BASE AT BEJA WILL CONTINUE TO BE USED BY THE ARMED FORCES OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC. FOUR MEMBERS OF THE GERMAN PARLIAMENT HAVE REACHED AN AGREEMENT TO THIS EFFECT IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PORTUGUESE. THE GERMAN PARLIAMENTARIANS, MEMBERS OF THE BUNDESTAG'S DEFENSE COMMITTEE, LOOKED INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF A TREATY EXTENSION AT BEJA. AT THE SAME TIME, THEY RESOLVED THE QUESTION OF WHETHER PORTUGAL MEANT TO HOLD TO ITS INTENTION OF TURNING THE BASE, BUILT BY THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC AT A COST OF 200 MILLION MARKS, OVER TO NATO.

THE GERMAN AIR FORCE IS INTERESTED IN AN EXTENSION OF THE TREATY, BECAUSE SPACE LIMITATIONS HAMPER PILOT TRAINING IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC. PORTUGAL HAS SIGNALLED THAT IT IS PREPARED TO LEAVE THE BASE, ABOUT 115 MILES SOUTHEAST OF LISBON, IN GERMAN HANDS, PROVIDED THERE ARE APPROPRIATE CONSIDERATIONS IN RETURN.

THE BASE WAS BUILT IN THE EARLY 60S AS A MAIN SUPPLY BASE FOR THE GERMAN AIR FORCE IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY. HOWEVER, IT HAS DECLINED IN IMPORTANCE BECAUSE OF NATO'S CHANGING STRATEGIC CONCEPTS. IT CONFIDENTIAL

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IS LITTLE USED AT PRESENT, WITH ABOUT 200 TAKEOFFS AND LANDINGS PER MONTH. BECAUSE OF THIS, MOST OF THE LUFTWAFFE PEOPLE STATIONED AT BEJA HAVE BEEN SENT BACK TO THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC.

THE PRESENT TREATY COVERING THE USE OF THE BASE EXPIRES NEXT YEAR. THE PORTUGUESE ARE FURTHER INTERESTED IN MAINTAINING THE BASE BECAUSE OF EMPLOYMENT IT MIGHT PROVIDE. THEY HOPE FOR ADDITIONAL ECONOMIC HELP FROM THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC, ESPECIALLY THE JOBS THAT COULD BE CREATED AT A POSSIBLE GERMAN-BUILT AIRCRAFT REPAIR FACILITY NEAR BEJA. END QUOTE.

2. FMOD OFFICIAL HAS TOLD US PRIVATELY THAT ALTHOUGH FRG PARLIAMENTARIANS VISITED PORTUGAL AND RECEIVED POSITIVE SIGNALS FROM PORTUGAL REGARDING PORTUGUESE INTEREST IN MAINTAINING AN FRG BASE IN BEJA, NO AGREEMENT HAS BEEN REACHED, NOR WERE THE BUNDESTAG DEFENSE COMMITTEE MEMBERS EMPOWERED TO CONCLUDE ANY SUCH AGREEMENT. THE MISLEADING PRESS REPORTS EMANATED FROM INTERPRETATIONS OF OBVIOUS PORTUGUESE INTEREST IN MAINTAINING FRG PRESENCE AND THE HOSPITALITY WITH

WHICH THE DEFENSE COMMITTEE MEMBERS WERE RECEIVED.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 01075

3. THE FMOD RECEIVED A NEW PORTUGUESE COMPROMISE
OFFER ON JANUARY 17, 1978. IT DIFFERS LITTLE FROM
ORIGINAL PROPOSAL DESCRIBED IN PARA 3 OF REFTEL B.
THE ANNUAL ASKING RENTAL PRICE OF 20 MILLION DM HAS
BEEN DROPPED AND LANGUAGE SUBSTITUTED WHICH CALLS FOR
"EXTENSIVE FRG INVESTMENTS AND CREDITS" OF AN UNSTATED
AMOUNT.

4. FMOD HAS ALREADY STUDIED THE PROPOSAL AND IS
RECOMMENDING ITS REJECTION. THEY ARE NOW COORDINATING
FRG POSITION ON THIS SUBJECT WITH FONOFF, BEFORE
INFORMING PORTUGAL OF THE DECISION NOT TO ACCEPT THE
NEW PROPOSAL.

5. THE CONSENSUS IN THE FMOD IS THAT THE PORTUGUESE
STILL DO NOT UNDERSTAND THAT FRG DOES NOT NEED BEJA
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AIR BASE AND HAS NO INTENTION OF PAYING A HIGH RENTAL PRICE TO A NATO ALLY FOR USE OF A MILITARY INSTALLATION.

6. COMMENT: FRG IS PREPARED TO RETAIN BEJA AIR BASE IF A REASONABLE SETTLEMENT ON CONTINUED BASE USE CAN BE REACHED. THE GERMANS ARE READY TO PROVIDE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND OTHER SWEETENERS TO OBTAIN SUCH AN AGREEMENT. THEY ARE NOT, HOWEVER, PREPARED TO BACK OFF ON THE QUESTION OF BASE RENTAL TO A NATO ALLY. THE GERMANS HAVE NOT HESITATED TO REMIND US OF THE EXTENSIVE ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE ALREADY BEING MADE AVAILABLE TO PORTUGAL AND ONE SENSES THAT THEY ARE LOSING PATIENCE WITH WHAT THEY PERCEIVE AS EXCESSIVE PORTUGUESE AVARICIOUSNESS ON THIS ISSUE. END COMMENT. STOESEL

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